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Advisory Committee on Water Information

Task Force to Review the USGS Cooperative Water Program in 2004

I. Official Designation

2004 ACWI Task Force to Review the USGS Cooperative Water Program (2004 Coop Task Force).

II. Background

The Cooperative Water Program (Coop), which was created in 1895, combines the resources of the Federal government with other governmental units to collect and analyze water-resources data. Most of the water-resources data collected in the United States are acquired under the auspices of this program. The Coop has been a highly successful cost-sharing partnership between the USGS and water-resource agencies at the State, Tribal, and local levels. In 2001, nearly 1,400 Cooperators participated. Although the Coop originated as a 50:50 fund-matching arrangement, cooperator funds have grown faster than USGS funds in recent years, contributing about two-thirds of the total funding.

The Advisory Committee on Water Information (ACWI) established the first external review of the Coop through its more than 100 year history at their August 1998 meeting in Denver, Colorado. The purpose of the 1999 Coop Task Force was to gather information, assess the effectiveness of the program, and recommend improvements. The resulting report, USGS Circular 1192, *External Task Force Review of the U.S. Geological Survey Federal-State Cooperative Water Program, August 1999*, presented 57 recommendations resulting from the review. A subsequent letter from the Secretary of the Interior, dated October 3, 2001, summarized the USGS response to the recommendations. For more information on the Coop and the 1999 Coop Task Force, see the web site at: <http://water.usgs.gov/wicp/acwi/coop>

This new Terms of Reference creates a 2004 Coop Task Force, to review the progress of the USGS in implementing the recommendations from the 1999 report.

III. Purpose, Scope and Applicability

Purpose - The purpose of the 2004 Coop Task Force is to assess the effectiveness of the USGS in addressing the recommendations of the 1999 Task Force. The 1999 report and related materials will be provided to all Task Force representatives. The written report of the 2004 Task Force should discuss continued actions to be taken by the USGS to more fully implement the recommendations from the 1999 report. These two reports taken together will serve as the basis for the ACWI to recommend mid-course corrections to enhance the USGS Cooperative Water Program, and will form the basis for an internal USGS 5-year action plan for the Program.

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Scope - The 2004 Coop Task Force is requested to conduct an interim review of the responses of the USGS to the 57 recommendations in Circular 1192 and evaluate the effectiveness of the USGS in following through on those responses. The scope does not include revisiting the 1999 recommendations, or conducting a new analysis or review of the Coop. The Task Force will have from March to August 2004 to provide a draft report to ACWI.

Applicability - As resources are available and consistent with applicable authorities, the USGS will make every effort to improve the operation of the USGS Cooperative Water Program, following the recommendations of the 1999 Coop Task Force, and consistent with the actions recommended by ACWI based on the 2004 Coop Task Force report. The USGS will report at least annually to the ACWI on the status of implementation of these improvements.

IV. Membership

The chair of the ACWI will designate up to nine organizations for membership on the 2004 Coop Task Force -- seven non-Federal organizations and two other Federal agencies. Of the non-Federal organizations, at least four will also be member organizations of the ACWI. Each organization selected as a Task Force member will then designate two individuals, one representative and an alternate, to represent them on the Task Force. For non-Federal organizations, these representatives should be appointed from the organization's membership or professional staff, may not be Federal employees, and should hold a professional/technical position in water resources.

V. Meetings and Procedures

The Chair of the 2004 Coop Task Force will be elected from among the non-Federal member representatives appointed to the 2004 Task Force. The USGS National Coop Coordinator will serve as the non-voting Executive Secretary for the 2004 Task Force. The Executive Secretary will convene the first meeting or conference call during April 2004, at which time the members of the 2004 Task Force will elect a non-Federal member as their Chair. The Chair will announce the date, time, and location of each subsequent meeting or conference call in advance. Support services shall be provided by USGS. The 2004 Task Force draft report is due to the Executive Secretary of the ACWI by August 15, 2004, in order to be available to provide to the ACWI member organizations for review and comment in advance of the 2004 ACWI annual meeting, scheduled for September 14-15.

Member organizations are expected to name a representative and an alternate to the 2004 Task Force. The 2004 Task Force will conduct business in an open fashion by discussing and attempting to resolve all issues through consensus and by recognizing the legitimate interests and diverse views of the member organizations as appropriate. When consensus cannot be reached there shall be a vote of the Task Force representatives, and the majority

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will rule. However, if 2 or more members disagree with the majority, it will be considered sufficient dissent to allow for a minority opinion to be reflected in documents of the Task Force. Representatives will receive no pay, allowances, or benefits from the ACWI by reason of their service on the Task Force. However, while away from their homes or regular place of business and in performance of service for the Task Force, non-Federal representatives will be reimbursed for appropriate travel expenses, if needed. Travel expenses will include transportation and per diem to cover meals and lodging.

The Executive Secretary of the 2004 Task Force will prepare and distribute to all members a summary of each meeting. Recommendations adopted, actions recommended to USGS, and the draft report of the Task Force will be submitted to the full ACWI membership for review and consideration. The Task Force will make appropriate revisions and respond to ACWI regarding the disposition of any comments or suggestions received. Once ACWI concurs with the Task Force findings, the Task Force will prepare a Final Report, which will be posted to the ACWI World Wide Web site. The Final Report and any additional materials used by the Task Force will be included in the official files maintained by the Executive Secretary of ACWI under the rules of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA). These documents will be available to the public at the following location:

USGS Water Information Coordination Program
417 National Center
12201 Sunrise Valley Drive
Reston, Virginia 20192

703-648-5645 or cilewis@usgs.gov

The 2004 Coop Task Force will sunset after the Secretary of the Interior responds to the ACWI recommendations for implementation of recommendations on the USGS Coop, at a time agreed upon by the ACWI.

VI. Products and Timelines

Copies of 2004 Task Force meeting summaries and special studies or analyses, if any, will be provided to the ACWI Executive Secretary for the ACWI official files, as required under FACA, prior to the termination of the 2004 Task Force.

A draft written report describing the findings of the 2004 Coop Task Force will be submitted to ACWI for review and consideration by August 15, 2004.

An oral presentation will be made by the 2004 Task Force to the ACWI membership at the ACWI Annual Meeting in September, 2004.

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A summary of the ACWI review comments on the draft report, and the 2004 Task Force response to those comments, will be submitted to ACWI for their information.

A final written report describing the findings of the 2004 Coop Task Force and the resulting ACWI recommendations to USGS will be sent to all ACWI member organizations following the ACWI 2004 annual meeting, no later than December 31, 2004.

Transmittal of the final report from ACWI to the Secretary of the Interior, for implementation by the USGS, no later than December 31, 2004.

VII. Authority

The 2004 Coop Task Force is part of the implementation of the Water Information Coordination Program mandated by OMB Memorandum No. M-92-01, dated December 10, 1991. The Task Force reports to the ACWI that operates under the FACA. The 2004 Coop Task Force has no independent authority to act without concurrence by the ACWI.

Dates of Approval:

2004 Coop Task Force

ACWI:

Glenn G. Patterson
Executive Secretary

Toni M. Johnson
Executive Secretary